

St Mary and St Benedict Catholic Primary School

Leigh Street, Hillfields, Coventry, CV1 5HG

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils make good progress in their learning, and achieve well in English and mathematics, especially in reading.
- From starting points that are below expectations for their age, pupils reach at least the national average by the end of Year 6. Many more than in the past are achieving above average levels in reading and mathematics.
- Good progress is being driven by good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and high expectations for their progress.
- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception class, especially those with very little knowledge of English.
- Pupils are enthusiastic learners with a thirst for knowledge. Although lively, they are also polite and caring towards each other.
- Staff ensure that pupils are kept safe at all times, and are well cared for. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school.
- The headteacher leads the school effectively, and is well supported by senior leaders and the remainder of the staff who work very well together.
- The governing body has good knowledge of the school's strengths and priorities. Governors are actively involved in promoting improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement. They have made sure that the significant pupil premium funding is spent to good effect.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Leaders, other than the headteacher, have too few opportunities to check the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- Teachers have limited opportunities to observe and learn from outstanding teaching, either in the school or elsewhere.
- The range of learning opportunities in subjects other than English and mathematics is not yet outstanding, although it is improving as a result of developing partnerships with several local schools.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons taught by 15 teachers, including five that were observed jointly with the headteacher and one with an assistant headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the headteacher, assistant headteachers, managers, three governors and two representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work. They examined the school’s improvement plans and its own checks on how well it is doing, safeguarding arrangements, health and safety records, school policies, a range of pupils’ work and information about their progress.
- Inspectors took account of 10 responses to the online survey (Parent View). They also had informal discussions with a number of parents before school.
- Inspectors examined 11 questionnaire responses from members of staff.

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Damian Booth	Additional Inspector
Wendy Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Mary and St Benedict Catholic Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A much higher than average proportion of pupils come from a number of minority ethnic heritages, the largest being African. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average, a few being at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A high proportion of pupils are supported through the pupil premium. This is additional funding, in this case, for children in the care of the local authority and who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is organised into mixed-age classes. The Nursery and Reception classes learn in a separate building from the main school and often share classrooms and the outside areas. Pupils in the main school are arranged into classes and sets for Years 1 and 2, Years 3 and 4, and Years 5 and 6.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school is linked to two neighbouring networks of schools: 'Fresh Eyes' (a primary schools group) and 'Unity' (a Catholic schools group including the local secondary school).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen leadership and management and increase the amount of outstanding teaching by:
 - providing more opportunities for leaders other than the headteacher to check teaching and learning, and develop their skills in improving teaching
 - ensuring that teachers have regular opportunities to observe excellent teaching in this and other schools.
- Make sure that pupils have a wide range of learning opportunities in all subjects, including through increasing links with existing partners in local school networks as quickly as possible.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Nursery with skills below those expected for their age, and much lower in language. A significant proportion of children start school with little understanding of English. Progress is good across the whole school and by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6, standards are average. The number of pupils reaching higher than average levels in English and mathematics is increasing every year.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because there have been some variations in progress over time, especially in writing and mathematics. School leaders have recognised this and as a result of rigorous new learning programmes in mathematics, for example, standards are now much more consistent. A small number of the most-able pupils are now working towards the very highest levels in mathematics.
- In writing, in order for pupils to reach consistently high standards, the school has taken action through the introduction of new writing schemes better suited to the needs of pupils which is already raising attainment effectively in all year groups.
- Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, especially in their language development and social skills. This good progress continues in all year groups, because of consistently good teaching, and very effective deployment of resources.
- Achievement is good for all groups of pupils. This includes pupils from the many minority ethnic heritages in the school, as well as disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- Most pupils who are supported through the pupil premium make good and sometimes outstanding progress, especially as they get older and their command of English is more secure. Their attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2012 was half a term ahead of their classmates in English and a term behind in mathematics. They do well as a result of careful and well-focused extra teaching and support, based upon a firm understanding of the needs of each pupil.
- The organisation of many learning groups in both English and mathematics is often very complex, but ensures that every pupil is working at suitably challenging levels. This was seen in a lesson in Years 3 and 4, when one group were recognising 'ur' sounds, as in 'nurse with a purse', and another group was learning about the use of alliteration such as 'slimy slugs.'
- The school is working hard to raise attainment in speaking by giving pupils more opportunities to talk and work together in learning activities.
- Reading progress is good for nearly all pupils and excellent for a significant number, because the school has concentrated on improving pupils' knowledge of letters and sounds (phonics). The focus on individual and group teaching is leading to faster progress in reading.
- Pupils read widely and have forthright views on what type of books they do or do not like. An example was the pupil who commented on the stories of Michael Morpurgo, saying, 'I like how he uses lots of mystery and short sentences to grab the reader's attention.' Pupils are careful to ensure their reading diaries are kept up to date, and are pleased that they get many opportunities to read to adults in school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and challenge which encourages pupils' thinking skills and strongly develops their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.
- This was observed several times in lessons in Years 5 and 6. In one, pupils' speaking skills were encouraged in their discussion on how they could belong and contribute to their communities of school, parish and culture. This also produced a wealth of ideas in their writing and word processing.
- In a typically challenging mathematics lesson, pupils learned and experimented with a range of approaches to multiplication when calculating word problems, sometimes in their heads, involving two- and three-digit numbers such as 625×49 .
- A particular feature in all years is the shared teaching present in many classes by teachers and learning support assistants. This works effectively because adults plan carefully together, have a wide range of strategies and data to follow the progress of pupils, and set demanding but realistic targets and criteria for success in learning. Pupils are all aware of what their learning targets are and what levels they have reached.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well understood by teachers who work closely with their learning support assistants in many support sessions to improve the learning and personal development of these pupils.
- Good teaching is also provided to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils with English as an additional language.
- Teaching is good in the Nursery and Reception classes where adults are harnessing children's natural enthusiasm to the development of their basic skills.
- There is some inconsistency in teachers' questioning although for the most part, teachers encourage pupils to answer with interesting vocabulary and whole sentences. Some questioning only offers the chance of brief responses. Leaders have already identified this for continued development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good and they know how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school. They say that the school keeps them very safe and their parents agree.
- Many pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and mention numerous learning activities which they enjoy, one saying, 'Here we learn something new every day.' They describe memorable visits to places like the Royal Albert Hall, where some of them sung on Mother's Day, and their residential adventure visit to Dol-Y-Moch.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception settle quickly into the routines of their learning and play, and behave very well in activities where they make their own choice or when they are involved in more formal sessions, learning to write simple sentences with the support of adults. The behaviour and safety of all of the children benefits from their regular opportunities to work and play together, especially in the spacious outdoor areas.

- Behaviour and attitudes are good in the well-organised and popular breakfast and after-school clubs.
- Pupils relate well to each other, to staff and visitors alike and are friendly, cheerful and polite. They are also ambitious for the future, suggesting that they would like to become, for example, a biologist, an archaeologist, a teacher or a doctor. They have a very well-developed understanding of the need for a good education for their future lives.
- Behaviour in lessons is nearly always good or better because pupils receive a good level of challenge in their learning. Just occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration and become distracted from their activities.
- Pupils feel that there is little or no problem with behaviour or bullying, and they have a good understanding of 'the behaviour ladder', and the dangers of bullying through the internet or mobile phones. A very small number of parents have concerns with bullying, but inspectors could find no evidence of complaint or in-school records to back this up.
- There have been no reported racial incidents in a school with pupils from many different backgrounds and cultures, and no exclusions in the last two years. The good promotion of inclusion, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development contributes to a positive and welcoming environment where human values are constantly emphasised.
- There are wide and effective links to external professionals and services which support the school in meeting the needs of pupils whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable.
- School leaders have worked hard and successfully to improve attendance which is now above average. Past problems with punctuality, although not fully resolved, are greatly improved.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is led by a very well-organised headteacher who shows great determination to raise the school's performance as high as possible. She is effectively supported by a team of assistant headteachers and other senior leaders. Staff share a strong ambition for improvement, and have built a good track record in this respect.
- Improvements to attainment and achievement in mathematics, and better systems for tracking pupils' progress, are two examples of effective leadership initiatives, which indicate a continuing capacity for improvement.
- Management is shared between subject, year and phase leaders who keep a very close watch on some often quite complicated arrangements for the successful promotion of learning and improvement of pupils' basic skills.
- However, much of the formal checking of teaching and learning is undertaken by the headteacher or advisors and although effective, this means that other senior leaders have insufficient opportunities to be involved in such direct monitoring. Teachers also do not have enough opportunities to observe examples of outstanding practice both in this and other schools.
- Meeting the training needs of staff, including those of newly qualified teachers, are a central part of the school's detailed self-evaluation and planning for future development.

- Teachers are well aware that they are held responsible for school improvement and for enabling their pupils to reach challenging targets. The effectiveness of this has been shown by the considerable achievements of pupils with English as an additional language, and those supported by the pupil premium.
- The school provides a good range of learning opportunities in most subjects, but rightly believes that even wider opportunities and resources are needed for pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics in order to prepare them effectively for the future. This is the aim of its partnerships in local networks with other schools. Existing opportunities have contributed well to pupils' good behaviour, an improvement in attendance and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- School leaders promote equal opportunities effectively in an overwhelmingly inclusive environment, and there is no evidence of discrimination through gender, ethnic heritage, disability or special educational needs.
- The school has appreciated support from the local authority where it has identified needs, and this is set to continue in future, although the authority has no concerns about the school's considerable ability to drive improvement.
- Leaders work hard to reach out to parents, offering many events, parent evenings and support, especially to those new to the country. Almost all parents would recommend the school to others.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. The knowledgeable Chair of the Governing Body, in particular, is very proactive in the management of the school, providing both support and challenge. The governing body has several new members and suitable opportunities for training are being provided for them. Governors monitor pupil premium spending in considerable detail and play their part in the school's regular self-evaluation, and analysis of performance data. They are involved in ensuring that staff performance is related to school and teachers' targets in relation to pupils' progress. Governors have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching in the school, and of the school's overall performance when compared with other schools nationally. They are beginning to relate this to the position of staff on pay scales. Governors ensure that policies are regularly reviewed and that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133556
Local authority	Coventry
Inspection number	406529
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	340
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Hancock
Headteacher	Pauline MacDonald
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2011
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